

MARINES FROM THE TRENCHES

In this edition, Marines report on history-making training in the Big Easy, where close-air support is used for the first time in a major U.S. city. They capture birthday celebrations and holiday cheer in Iraq, helicopter support team training in the desert near Yuma, Ariz., and the softer side of Marines who helped bring relief to the storm-ravaged Philippine Islands. Across the country and the globe, Marines delivered news *From the Trenches*.

26th MEU Makes Training History in New Orleans

Close-air Support, Video Feeds Key to Realistic Urban Exercises for Marines Headed to Iraq

By Sgt. Roman Yurek
JOINT RESERVE BASE, New Orleans

Training in an urban environment is traditional for Marine Expeditionary Units preparing for deployment. But for the Marines and sailors of the 26th MEU, their training in an urban environment exercise here Dec. 4-16 was anything but traditional.

The TRUEX included a list of notable "firsts," including the Corps' first urban convoy with close-air support through a major U.S. city, and a live video feed of combat operations beamed straight to the MEU's command post.

During the urban convoy, the MEU drove several vehicles throughout New Orleans, both day and night, with aircraft support from several elements of Marine aviation.

AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopters and AV-8B Harriers from Marine

> Marines of the 26th MEU's MSPF move by convoy to an objective during an urban training exercise in New Orleans Dec. 13. The use of close-air support with convoys in a major U.S. city is a first for the Marine Corps.

Photo by Cpl. Eric R. Martin



▲ Marines from the 26th MEU's MSPF assault across a field near their objective during a practice raid for a TRUEX. Marines spent the 13 days of the exercise training in New Orleans. *Photo by Sgt. Roman Yurek*

Medium Helicopter Squadron 162 (Reinforced); EA-6B Prowlers from Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 1; and a KC-130 from Marine Air Refueler Transport Squadron 252, were stacked at altitudes from 500 to 15,000 feet, to support the convoy.

A forward air controller with the convoy relayed the ground scheme of maneuver to the supporting aircrews so they could make the best decisions on how to support the convoy.

"I take the information from the troops on the ground and translate it in a way the pilots understand," said Capt. Scott Peters, the convoy FAC and assistant air officer for the MEU. He relayed important data during all phases of the convoy including the critical casualty evacuation phase, when CH-46E helicopters landed in the city to pick up and transport simulated casualties to the rear for medical care.

As the convoy moved through the city streets, a Pelican reconnaissance aircraft provided a live video feed of the progress directly to the combat operations center at Joint Reserve Base New Orleans, located twenty miles away.

The Pelican was used during all the MEU's training scenarios here and proved to be an invaluable asset. Provided by the Joint Forces Command, Pelican is a piloted version of the unmanned reconnaissance aircraft commonly referred to as Scan Eagle. To cre-

ate Pelican, Scan Eagle sensors are placed on a piloted Cessna aircraft, since FAA regulations prohibit unmanned aircraft to be flown over U.S. cities.

"Every faction, from the FAC to the drivers to the aircrews, learned a lot more about how to execute urban CAS and urban convoy support," said Maj. Brian R. Blalock, 26th MEU air officer. "We are really grateful to the people of New Orleans for letting us do this training."

The urban convoy operations provided a realistic urban training environment to prepare the 26th MEU for deployment.

Focusing on real-world scenarios and tactics currently used by enemies in the Global War on Terrorism, TRUEX was structured around four situational training exercises where the capabilities of the MEU's Maritime Special Purpose Force were brought to center stage. The MSPF is the MEU's surgical strike force. It is used in situations where a large-scale conventional assault is not the desired action.

The Marines of II Marine Expeditionary Force's Special Operations Training Group – responsible for administering the training – used simulated terrorist cells, hostage situations, chemical weapons, roadside bombs and improvised explosive devices to test the abilities of the MEU. Shortfalls discovered during training will be corrected before the

MEU can be designated special operations capable.

One corporal who thought the training was very realistic may be among the most qualified to make that call. After back-to-back tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, Cpl. Justin Burza of Kalamazoo, Mich., is now a blocking team leader for the MSPF. His team's mission is to protect the force reconnaissance platoon from threats outside the objective area during raids.

"You have (simulated) rounds and there are a lot of SOTG instructors who make it real for you," he said of the four missions he took part in during TRUEX. "It all seems very realistic, especially using the trucks. That is the way we normally did things in Iraq. We would roll in, jump off the trucks, do what we had to do and jump back on the trucks."

"We came here to demonstrate a high degree of success in urban combat operations, and the Marines and sailors in the 26th MEU showed themselves extraordinarily," said Col. Thomas F. Qualls, 26th MEU commanding officer. "We were challenged by (exercises) with varying degrees of complexity. On each one, we got better and better."

This training is especially significant because the Marines are headed for combat in a few months, said Qualls. "There is no doubt in my mind this MEU is where it needs to be as we approach our final days before we sail." **M**

"There is no doubt in my mind this MEU is where it needs to be."



Climbing to New Heights

Marine's Confidence Soars After Mountain Leaders Course

By Sgt. Len Langston
MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT SAN DIEGO



▲ **Sgt. David L. Walter** learned his climbing skills at the Summer Mountain Leaders Course in Bridgeport, Calif. The course is more than six weeks long and enhances small unit leaders' mountain operations abilities. Subjects taught include rappelling, fixed rope installations, climbing and medevac techniques, mule packing and many other skills necessary to be effective in a mountainous environment. For more information on training courses offered at MCMWTC, visit www.mwtc.usmc.mil.

Photo by Sgt. Len Langston

Hiking 5.2 miles of mountainous terrain with a 63-pound pack and a rifle in 85 minutes or less earned Sgt. David L. Walter a spot at the Summer Mountain Leaders Course at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, Bridgeport, Calif.

But the spark kindled by that course burns long after he left Bridgeport. Walter has immersed himself into

the sport of rock climbing and now persuades others to do the same.

Walter, the training noncommissioned officer and administration clerk for Service Company, has embarked on a trek to free himself from the stresses of the Marine Corps, at least for a moment's time, when he's contorting his 5-foot-11-inch lanky body around a boulder or cliff to reach the summit, or "top out."

"You're scared to death, but once you

make it, it's a great sense of accomplishment and a rush," he said.

Perched on a boulder 30 feet off the ground, with nothing but countless hours of climbing techniques, rubber soled shoes, a chalk pouch and a strong grip, Walter doesn't spend time being scared of heights – not anymore at least.

"I used to climb trees when I was a kid. I wasn't super scared, but I used to freeze up," he said.

Freezing up was not an option when he was 200 feet up a cliff, roped in with another climber, leap-frogging to the top.

The Mountain Leaders Course helped Walter overcome his fear of heights.

"It takes such focus and all you're thinking about is the rock and that next move," Walter said.

Walter tries to get Marines involved in rock climbing and he leads a group at a local rock gym.

"He's a very good teacher," said Lance Cpl. Jared M. Padula, combat photographer, Combat Visual Information Center. "Without his instruction, I would not have made it very far, and I think I'm in good shape. Seeing him contort his body like that makes it look feasible. He has a rhythm when going up the rock."

Walter tries to climb three to four times a week, either in the gym or outdoors, but he admits it's difficult to squeeze in the time between his other hobbies – singing, songwriting, and scuba diving.

"I'm just having fun with it and I'm enjoying meeting new people as well as keeping up with my abilities for training," he said.

Walter says he wants to return to Bridgeport as an assault climber instructor or transfer to an infantry unit and deploy to Afghanistan to become an advisor.

"I'm a challenge-oriented person and rock climbing is the perfect sport," he said. "It just clicks with me." **M**

Drill Instructor School is like returning to boot camp, according to rumor. Consequently, some students show up there expecting a trip back to their first day on the yellow footprints.

But that's only rumor. While the school is challenging, it's not a return to recruit training, according to the school's new first sergeant.

"Professionalism starts here," said 1st Sgt. Robert A. Ledferd. "The focus here is on leadership. We focus on the leadership traits and principals, and that creates a professional atmosphere."

Ledferd was assigned to DI School last August after serving as first sergeant for L Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion. As the senior enlisted Marine at the school, he helps ensure future drill instructors are prepared to train future recruits.

Marines headed to the drill field start their journey at the 12-week school. During the course, students spend 55 training days mastering a variety of subjects, including extensive first aid classes, CPR, general military subjects, swim qualification and physical fitness training.

They also participate in and conduct uniform inspections and have their leadership evaluated by instructors and fellow students. The students also stretch their legs during five and eight-mile hikes at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif. The hikes are a part of preparation for the Crucible, which the students go through toward the end of the course.

"The students go through everything the recruits go through during training," said Ledferd, a 41-year-old native of Springfield, Ill.

But a big part of the course curriculum focuses on drill and learning the Standard of Operations manual – the bible for recruit training.

All the classes prepare Marines to take

DI School's Top Enlisted Tramples Boot Camp Mystique

Professionalism, Leadership Create Positive Environment for DI Students

By Master Sgt. Janice M. Hagar, MCRD SAN DIEGO



▲ **Staff Sgt. Alejandro Walker**, student DI, fills in answers to his written CPR test. Walker was last stationed at MCRD San Diego as an administrative chief. Photo by Cpl. Edward R. Guevara Jr.

on the responsibility of training the Corps' future. While many Marines volunteer for the drill field, they don't know what school will be like.

"You hear stories out in the fleet about DI school," said Ledferd. "But we treat students as sergeants and staff noncommissioned officers."

The goal is for the students to be leaders first and DIs second, he said.

"The example needs to be set for students to conduct themselves as DIs, and how they should treat their fellow Marines when they go across the street

(after graduation), especially those junior to them."

One way Ledferd is changing the school atmosphere is with counseling.

"There's not a lot of yelling and screaming like in recruit training," said Ledferd, who first served as a drill instructor at MCRD Parris Island, S.C., in 1994. "It's positive and corrective counseling. It puts the focus on positive leadership, vice negative leadership."

Ledferd, a former artilleryman, said DI School should be more like professional military education schools like the Sergeant, Career and Advanced courses.

"I feel the atmosphere should be on a scholar and student relationship, vice a DI and recruit relationship."

Before Marines can get orders to DI School, they must have a first-class physical fitness test score, all required annual training must be completed, and they must have family and financial stability.

"We usually have four classes per year," said Ledferd. "We start with about 60 students, but there is a 15-to-20-percent attrition rate. That's normally due to medical issues that pre-existed in a student or due to injuries that happen at school."

DI School is challenging, said Ledferd, but the journey doesn't stop when the students earn the coveted DI campaign cover. A tour on the drill field is also very challenging, but DI school equips Marines with what they need to succeed.

"Be firm, but fair and demanding to recruits," said Ledferd. "Use the leadership traits and principles and that will help you be a successful DI." **M**

"Once you make it, it's a great sense of accomplishment and a rush."





Helicopter Support Teams Get Taste of Desert

Desert Talon Gives Lejeune-based BTO Co. Needed Lift in HST Training

Story by Cpl. Rocco DeFilippis
MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA, Ariz.



▲ A CH-53E Super Stallion from HMM-465 hovers close over helicopter support team Marines from 2nd TSB as they prepare to attach a 17,000-pound load to the heavy hauler. The helicopter is capable of lifting 16 tons at sea level, transporting the load 575 miles and returning.

Photo by Cpl. Rocco DeFilippis

Flying a helicopter with a 17,000-pound payload dangling beneath it is a challenge.

But when the payload is vital equipment or supplies, it must be done.

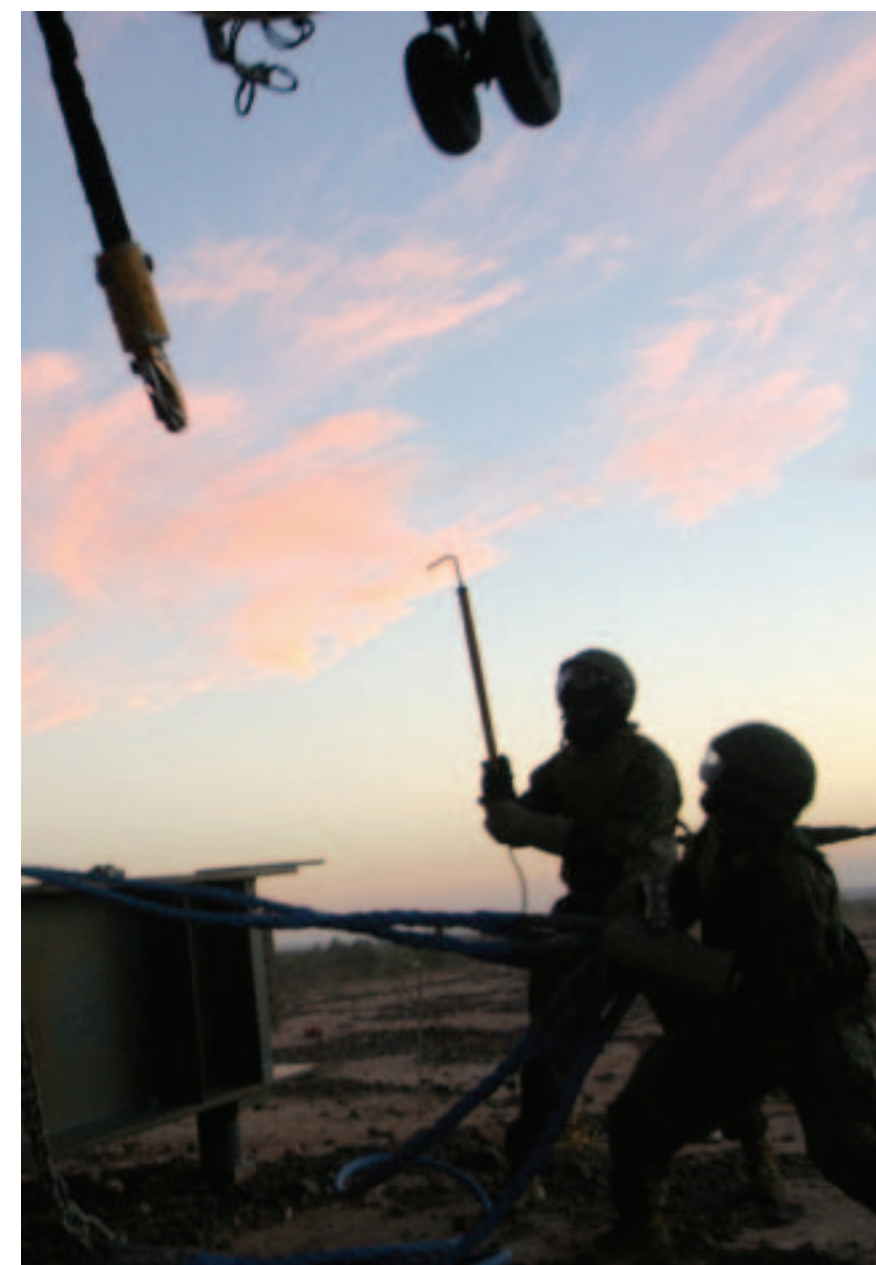
The Marines of Beach Terminal Operations Company, 2nd Transportation Support Battalion, 2nd Force Service Support Group, make heavy lifts possible by providing a vital link between the birds in the air and the gear on the ground.

The company is preparing for deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom by participating in Exercise Desert Talon 01-05 here Dec. 8, 2004.

“In garrison, we work about two helicopter support teams a week, here we are doing at least six a week,” said Sgt. Jason E. Lott, HST head team leader, and native of Mobile, Ala. “The environment here in the deserts of California and Arizona is very similar to what we will face in Iraq.”

The brownout conditions, rocks, dust, and debris, are much different than the grassy fields of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., where the unit is stationed.

During the first flight operations phase of Desert Talon, aviation squadrons



◀ Lance Cpls. Michael A. Whitaker and Matthew D. Schiltz, landing support specialists with 2nd TSB, prepare to attach 40,000-pound slings to a CH-53E Super Stallion during helicopter support team training. The Marines must use grounding rods to grab the pennants to protect them from the 20,000 volts of static electricity that can building up on the lift cable. Photo by Cpl. Rocco DeFilippis

CH-53E Sea Stallion

Specifications:

Primary function: Transportation of heavy equipment and supplies during the ship-to-shore movement of an amphibious assault and during subsequent operations ashore.

Manufacturer: Sikorsky Aircraft

Power plant: Three General Electric T64-GE-416 turbo shaft engines producing 4380 shaft horsepower each.

Length: 99 feet 5 inches

Height: 28 feet 4 inches

Rotor diameter: 79 feet

Speed: 172.5 mph

Maximum takeoff weight:

With Internal load: 69,750 pounds

With external load attached: 73,500 pounds

Range:

Without refueling: 621 miles

With aerial refueling: indefinite

Armament:

Two XM-218 .50-caliber machine guns.

Crew: 3

Introduction date: June 1981

Unit Replacement Cost: \$26,100,000

Inventory: 160

Information pulled from the Marine Corps Fact File at www.marines.mil/factfile

flew squadron specific flight missions, focusing on the lessons learned from 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing units operating in Iraq.

The HST Marines joined up with CH-53Es of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465, from MCAS Miramar, Calif., at Landing Zone Bull for heavy lifting operations. The zone is a dried up creek bed full of rocks in a remote desert of southern California.

“Our focus is on setting up the lifts to the best of our ability so the pilots can train,” said Cpl. Daniel J. Botting, landing support specialist from Manawa, Wis.

With some convoy routes in Iraq taking up to 16 hours to complete and all the dangers that go with moving supplies on Iraqi roads, aerial resupply has become invaluable in Iraq.

“The ability of the Marine Corps to provide aerial resupply hinges on HST Marines being able to operate under any circumstances,” said Staff Sgt. Patrick M. Wales, HST staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge from Winter Haven, Fla. “Training here at Desert Talon prepares the Marines to complete the mission and support the fight when the dust and rocks are flying.” ■

“The environment here is very similar to what we will face in Iraq.”



Marines Aid Storm-Ravaged Philippines

Emergency Relief Supplies Ease Suffering in Island Nation

Story by Lance Cpl. Joel Abshier
CLARK AIR BASE, Philippines



▲ **Logs & trees litter the beaches near destroyed homes** in Real Dec. 10. Successive tropical storms killed nearly 1,000 Filipinos and left many more homeless. The Philippines is a scattering of more than 7,000 tropical islands that create southeast Asia's border with the Pacific Ocean. It was strategically significant during World War II. The U.S. military maintained a presence here until 1997 and continues to maintain strong relations with the nation.

Photo by Lance Cpl. Joel Abshier



▲ **Landing support specialist Lance Cpl. Jesse M. Ford** grabs a box of bottled water to load onto a CH-46E helicopter at the Manila International Airport Dec. 10. Okinawa, Japan-based 3rd MEB Marines and sailors with the JTF-535 provided immediate lifesaving support to flood-devastated areas of the Philippines.

Photo by Lance Cpl. Joel Abshier

More than 600 Marines and other service members with Joint Task Force 535 arrived here Dec. 7 to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief for people who were affected by severe storms.

Successive tropical storms killed more than 650 Filipinos, left more than 400 missing and displaced at least

168,000 since Dec. 3, said Lt. Col. Gregory F. Bond, operations officer for JTF-535.

"JTF-535's mission is to provide immediate lifesaving support to the flood-devastated areas of the Philippines," Bond said. "We are doing everything we can to minimize human suffering and the loss of life."

The Marines and other service members, mostly from the Okinawa, Japan-based 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade, are delivering relief supplies, such as water, food and shelter items to distribution points, said Bond.

The Philippine government requested aid from the United States to assist the towns of General Nakar, Infanta and Real in the Quezon Province, said Bond.

Within 36 hours of receiving the call for help, an assessment team was sent to the area. They then determined accessibility for the service members and supplies that would be needed. Within 48 hours, the first wave of help arrived.

U.S. service members are working closely with the Philippine armed forces, who are providing helicopter landing zone safety and assisting in the loading and unloading of supplies, said Bond.

"The Marine Corps is always on call, whether for peacekeeping or humanitarian reasons," said Staff Sgt. Frankie G. Newton, a radio chief with JTF-535. "Because I am Filipino and was born here, it is important (to me) that the United States keeps a positive relationship with this country."

"The forward presence of the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade significantly contributes to United States' ability to respond to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief," said Brig. Gen. Kenneth J. Glueck, the task force's commanding general. "It is my hope that (JTF-535) will alleviate the human suffering caused by these natural disasters." ■

Deck Stacked in Children's Favor

Toys for Tots Poker Run Nets Thousands of Dollars for Needy Children

By Gunnery Sgt. Frank Patterson, TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif.



▲ **A biker chooses the three of spades** as Toys for Tots volunteers record the draw at Pappy & Harriet's Pioneertown Palace in Pioneertown, Calif. Photo by Sgt. Jennie E. Haskamp

About 250 men and women bundled in their warmest clothing here Dec. 4 and prepared to hit the road in a scene reminiscent of a 1960s biker movie.

The riders participated in the inaugural Hutchins Motor Sports Toys for Tots Poker Run – a nearly 40-mile ride that raised more than \$3,000 and 300 toys.

The money, about \$500 from the riders and \$2,500 from a local business owner, will be used to buy gifts for children in age groups that are hard to collect for, said Capt. Mark D. Bodde, chairman, Toys for Tots Advisory Committee.

"This, in addition to the toys, will provide a merry Christmas to many children throughout the Morongo Basin."

The ride started at Hutchins' in Yucca Valley and proceeded to Pappy and Harriet's in Pioneertown, then along Pipes Canyon Road and Old Woman Springs Road to the Roadhouse in Yucca Valley.

Riders collected playing cards at each

checkpoint along the route and at the end of the run, the male and female riders with the highest and lowest poker hands won prizes.

The last leg of the route took them to Luckie Park where they met Santa Claus, some "elves" wearing the Marine Corps Dress Blue uniform, and found enough hamburgers and hot dogs to feed a battalion.

"It was a good ride," said Petty Officer 1st Class Mark Terrill, corpsman, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Bn. "I love the road through the valley."

At the park, Staff Sgt. Lee Coe, co-owner of the Cactus Bar in Twenty-nine Palms, presented Bodde with a check for \$2,500.

"Every year our patrons get together and raise money for a charity," Coe said. "This year we chose Toys for Tots."

The generosity and enthusiasm of the community is certain to make a difference in the lives of local families and children this year, said Bodde. ■



Logistics Battalion Provides Vital Support to Wing

By Cpl. Rocco DeFilippis
AL ASAD, Iraq



> Lance Cpl. Stephen Fischer, a CLB-2 bulk fuel specialist, conducts flash point tests on a sample of JP-8 jet fuel March 15. The test measures what temperature the fuel ignites at, which helps to determine if the fuel has been contaminated.

Photo by Cpl. Rocco DeFilippis

The Marines and sailors here from Combat Logistics Battalion 2 are committed to the Global War on Terrorism and provide a multitude of daily services to the fixed and rotary wing aircraft flying missions in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"We support the wing in two major areas," said Lt. Col. Kyle J. Nickel, CLB-2 executive officer and native of Bay City, Mich. "The aviation combat element is naturally self-sufficient, but we help by providing intermediate ground maintenance and engineering support."

Since their arrival here on Feb. 19, the fuels Marines have redesigned fuel storage areas for the 1.5 million gallons of fuel stored here on a daily basis. They replace worn fuel lines, and pump up to 200,000 gallons of jet fuel per day to support flight operations.

"We sample and test all the fuel that comes through here before it is pumped out to the various fuel farms where we store fuel," said Cpl. Robinette M. Roxburgh, bulk fuel specialist and native of Salt Lake City. "Our Marines are great, when they get a mission, it's done."

From an engineering perspective, the engineers and material handling equipment operated by CLB-2 Marines helps ensure troops, equipment, vehicles and supplies are loaded and unloaded at the arrival and departure point.

"We work hand in glove with the Marines of the airfield liaison element to load and offload the planes and take accountability of the passengers and gear," said Maj. Mark A. Brennan, operations officer and native of Walnut, Ill. "As those ground maintenance supplies are brought here, we have our hands on them to distribute them to all the units in the wing."



> Lance Cpls. Gustaw D. Sasiadek and Leon M. Jarvis, bulk fuel specialists with CLB-2, work to attach a fuel line to one of the fuel farm's 50,000-gallon bladders. The bulk fuel Marines redesigned the fuel farm to minimize damage from possible enemy rocket attacks. Photo by Cpl. Rocco DeFilippis

In addition to their efforts at the fuel storage area and arrival and departure point, almost every service provided here has CLB-2 Marines and sailors behind it. From postal services and medical care, to disbursing and mortuary affairs, the support from the logistics battalion improves the quality of life for all service members and Department of Defense employees here.

"We have roughly 200 different military occupational specialties across the broad spectrum of operations," Brennan said. "Our job is to support the war fighter, and we want to do everything we can to provide the best combat logistics possible."

Not only is the battalion supporting the air base, the Marines and sailors are responsible for running convoys that distribute food, water and supplies to the forward operating bases in the Al Anbar province.

"We already have a lot of miles under

our belts," said Cpl. Benjamin P. Burns, loadmaster and native of Henderson, Nev. "We are busy everyday. If we aren't on the road, we are performing maintenance. If we aren't doing maintenance we are planning and preparing for our next convoy."

With some convoys traveling up to 500 miles round trip, the Marines of the battalion's transportation company are overcoming mines, improvised explosive devices and horrible road conditions to ensure service members at the remote posts have the essentials.

"These Marines drive into the face of danger everyday," Nickel said. "In light of that, they get the mission accomplished."

"The motivation of these Marines and sailors is remarkable," Brennan said. "They honestly care about what they are doing because they know the importance of their tasks. A lot of people depend on them, and they always come through." **M**

JP-8 Jet Fuel

Specifications:

- JP-8 is made by refining crude petroleum.
- The primary ingredient in JP-8 is kerosene, which is about 99.8% by weight.
- JP-8 also contains very small amounts of many other substances, such as benzene, and various additives to inhibit icing, prevent static charge buildup, avoid oxidation, and decrease corrosion.

Information pulled from www.brooks.af.mil

"These Marines drive into the face of danger everyday, they get the mission accomplished."

